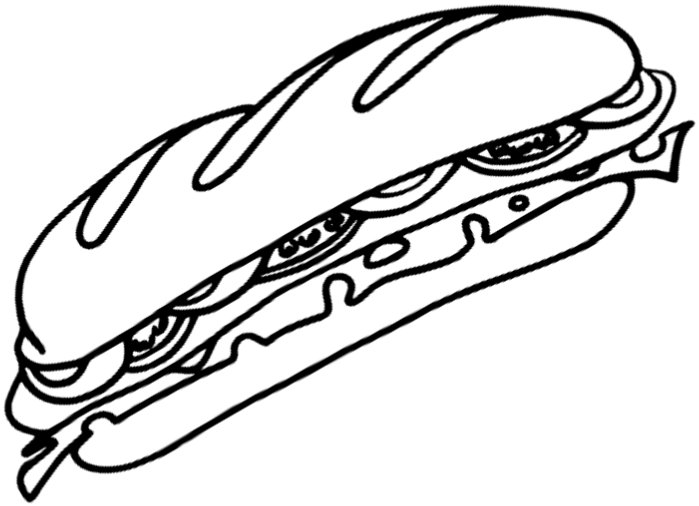

THE WHOLE CITY IS FIGHTING BACK

Remora House on Grassroots Resistance to Military Occupation in Washington, D.C.

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“The Whole City is Fighting Back”: Remora House on Grassroots Resistance to Military Occupation in DC

https://itsgoingdown.org/whole-city-fighting-back-dc/

abducted by ICE? Can you offer your car, bike, wagon to help them get meals out?

***IGD:** Where can people donate, follow, and support mutual aid and local organizing?*

RH: Migrant Solidarity Mutual Aid, Remora House, Feed the People Mutual Aid, HIPS, Food not Bombs DC, Ward 1 Mutual Aid, Ward 2 Mutual Aid, Harriet's Wildest Dream, and Free DC. For news, check out *The 51st*.

For the last several weeks, federal agents and National Guard troops have flooded the streets of Washington DC, setting up an authoritarian occupation of the city; harassing residents, dismantling homeless encampments, and arresting undocumented workers. Under the manufactured pretext of "crime," the Trump administration is accelerating the weaponization of both law enforcement and the military against targeted populations within the United States.

As *Mother Jones* reported:

> The White House has claimed arrests in DC are up since the takeover began, but they have refused to release detailed information backing those claims. And what data they have revealed suggests that arrests of undocumented immigrants, not violent criminals, account for the increase. The administration also asserts that the federal takeover has led to the dismantling of at least 48 homeless encampments, but lacking any plans for where the homeless will go, that effort appears to prioritize short-term aesthetics over longer-term solutions. Some tent-dwellers already appear to be returning to previously cleared areas.

As we speak, National Guard troops have now been armed with firearms and one National Guardsman has already caused one person to be hospitalized, after a “14-ton, mine-resistant armored vehicle” ran a red-light, and crashed into an SUV.

ICE agents have also used the military buildup to continue carrying out draconian operations against migrant workers – while also ramping up attacks on political speech and organizing that challenges their power. Again, from *Mother Jones:*

> On Thursday in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood….federal agents appear to have left a dildo in the place of an anti-ICE banner they purloined a week before, residents confronted and pursued three apparently off-duty federal agents, cursing at them and taunting them about the sex toy. “Did you forget your dildo?” the woman shooting the video repeatedly asked.

In response, DC residents have taken to the streets in mass protests, set up rallies to oppose checkpoints, held open air concerts and noise demos, organized mutual aid programs, and mobilized to confront and drive out ICE agents from their neighborhoods. The streets of DC have also seen an explosion of street art, with posters giving a nod to a recent incident where an individual threw a sandwich at federal agents.

Wanting to know more about what is happening on the streets of DC, we reached out the Remora House, an autonomous mutual aid group based in DC, about the growing movement against the military occupation.

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history of erasing resistance, protest, mutual aid, and organizing that goes beyond the National Mall and houses of power.

What is also missed here is what is protest? What is resistance? Marches in the street, banners, signs, yeah that’s all one form of protest. Its flashy, its visible, journalists have photo opportunities, they pray a trash can is set on fire. But the person screaming out of their car window calling an ICE agent a Nazi is a protest. The people getting food to families of migrant neighbors abducted by ICE is resistance. Refusing to accept the police state, organizing to keep each other safe, directing traffic away from checkpoints, escorting folks to food pantries are all beautiful acts of resistance in a moment that the state wants us to hide and feel afraid.

***IGD:** If Trump follows through with threats to flood other cities with federal troops, what lessons from DC do you think they should learn from?*

RH: Communities should start doing car care clinics to lessen the likelihood of opportunistic traffic stops. Mutual aid groups and other services for migrant communities – churches, food pantries, mutual aid distributions – should start working on safety plans for the folks they provide resources to in order to diminish the opportunity for ICE to make arrests and to continue to provide support to the people who need it.

Get ‘Know Your Rights’ information out to everyone but especially Black and Brown neighbors most likely to be criminalized. Practice with them so they are ready. Support mutual aid networks already in place supporting these communities.

Is there a cop watch hotline in your city? Can you get trained up and ready to support when there is an influx of calls? Is there a mutual aid network already providing care to families of people

This is great, but not the best long term strategy, we don't have the time or money to keep it up long term, especially when we're looking at at least a month of the occupation. As encampments are constantly being evicted and unhoused folks are under near consent threat of state violence, we have found less want tents and more are asking for carts, sleeping bags, and tarps so they can be more mobile. We have responded by trying to listen and shift our supplies to meet this need.

IGD: *We're seeing protests, street art campaigns celebrating rebel sandwich throwers, and go-go "Free DC" music festivals. While the media has pushed a line of, "Where are all the protests," in reality it seems a lot is going on and the vast majority of the public is against what is happening. How do you see this continuing to manifest going forward?*

RH: People constantly forget DC is an actual city with real communities, families, groups, and individuals that work, go to school, and do all those normal everyday things people do in other cities.

DC has a long, radical history of tenant, worker, youth, and immigrant organizing. DC is Chocolate City, a name filled with decades of Black radical thought and action. During the 1980s, some of the countries strongest rights and policies were won for unhoused people through direct action and organizing. National media always portrays DC as the White House and Congress. It's hard to not see that playing out here. Democrats are barely doing anything, let alone protesting. Therefore they think DC is doing nothing. That is far from the truth. So many of us are organizing daily, making safe spaces for our youth, immigrant, and unhoused communities. We hope that the awesome work being done by everyday people in this city gains traction, but there is a long

IGD: *What are some of the big things you want people outside of DC to know about what is happening there?*

Remora House: The whole city is fighting back every day in every corner of the city.

Youth organizers are showing up and demanding their schools and spaces be free of police and federal occupation. Mutual aid groups are supporting unhoused neighbors during and after evictions in an incredibly hostile landscape giving them no options for a safe place to sleep. Migrant support groups are running hotlines to report detentions and providing legal support for people as well as making sure impacted families are fed and emotionally supported. Folks are hopping on bikes and patrolling the city to report checkpoints and other fed activity. People trying to enjoy some pizza on a restaurant patio are taking a quick second to yell at feds and national guard troops walking down the street.

The occupying forces haven't had a moment of peace and the city is working tirelessly to protect and support each other.

IGD: *In general, we've seen on social media lots of reports of both checkpoints of police and various federal agencies, ICE carrying out targeted arrests, and also National Guard troops basically standing around. What are you seeing in regards to the deployment of federal troops and agents? What are they doing? Is there a strategy, or is this all for spectacle on Fox News?*

RH: In DC, federal agents have been paired up with Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) officers, who are absolutely giving them intel on what neighborhoods have a large migrant community and high traffic areas to set up checkpoints and fish for any possible "crime" they can escalate to arrests.

ICE has targeted churches and food pantries in a neighborhood heavily populated with migrant neighbors – they knew to do that

because MPD told them where to go. So bank on them having guidance from local PD, they won't be floundering trying to figure out where to go for long. They've also been setting up traffic checkpoints during rush hour (6-8pm) in some of the busiest intersections in the city, again being guided by local police to target Black neighborhoods.

Traffic stops have been escalated to arrests for nearly anything. Small infractions that would have MAYBE been a fine, if pursued at all, are arrests now. Tail lights out? Arrest. Selling loose cigarettes? Arrest. Smoking a joint in the park, where marijuana is decriminalized? Arrest. Fare evasion? Arrest. They are intentionally and strategically aggravating and escalating people so they can ramp up charges of evading arrest and assault. Part of it is absolutely for show, but its having very real impacts on the community and resulting and real arrests.

The National Guard is largely a spectacle, but the feds are very much targeting vulnerable communities and causing real harm.

IGD: *Why do you think Trump did not do that ride along like he threatened to do? This came after Vance, Miller and Hegseth were mocked and protested when they went out in public.*

RH: They have yet to have a successful photo-op in all of this because they are just being screamed at and called couch fuckers anytime they make an appearance. They wouldn't have gotten the propaganda they wanted.

IGD: *We've seen a lot of viral videos of rapid response teams setting up protests around checkpoints and people heckling agents and driving them out of public spaces. Can you speak more to what is happening on the ground?*

RH: People are sharing information on checkpoints super quickly online and DC is not a large city so people are able to mobilize quickly. On the ground, folks are self organizing to both film the cops, support anyone being detained, absolutely roasting every officer present, and setting up at intersections ahead of the checkpoints with posters to divert traffic around.

But a lot of it is just the people of DC trying to go about their day, seeing feds targeting people or trying to patrol neighborhoods, and taking some time to scream at them and let them know they are not welcome here, they are not wanted, and we're not going to be fucking quiet about it.

IGD: *What in the fuck happened with this dildo in the park with the banner?*

RH: Lol, no idea really. Feds tore down pro-migrant banners twice in a neighborhood with a large migrant community. The second time they left a dildo? Maybe they are the same tech bros throwing dildos at the WNBA games?

IGD: *How have mutual aid groups responded to attacks on the houseless community?*

RH: We have had a hard time with this one. One thing we have done is try to get information out to unhoused people, getting out know your rights information and safety precautions to take specifically for the unhoused community, as well as keeping people updated on what's happening, what's changing, what neighborhoods seem to be really targeted.

Previously, (on January 6th and the months of fascist marches leading up to it and the lockdown following), we have focused on hotels and metro cards to get folks temporarily out of harms way. Some groups have been working to get folks up in hotels immediately after an eviction so they have a few days to rest and regroup.